

State Dept. review completed

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NSC BRIEFING

15 January 1958

25X1

TUNISIAN-FRENCH NEGOTIATIONS (*long form*)

I. Preliminary Tunisian-French negotiations of a common defense agreement were broken off by Paris 15 January on the grounds of alleged Tunisian aid to Algerian rebels which caused serious political repercussions inside France.

A. French claim that on 11 January force of 250-400 Algerian rebels retreated into northern Tunisia after clash with French military patrol, taking several French "prisoners." French claim rebels were met inside border by Tunisian National Guard unit and that Tunisia does not adequately control border area.

1. Tunisians deny rebels given refuge; claim border sealed off by Guard.

II. New tension had already been aroused by earlier border incident-- 2 January--when French forces in Algeria crossed border, kidnapping 15 Tunisians from border village in south-central Tunisia.

III. Situation further complicated by President Bourguiba's refusal 8 January to agree to stationing of some 800 French air police at four airfields in southern Tunisia. French forces totalling 18,000 (14,000 army; 4,000 air force) now occupy these and

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other installations. Bourguiba's acquiescence considered essential before French would make concessions in other spheres.

A. According to French Ambassador in Tunis, Bourguiba also threatened that if France did not agree to evacuate all Tunisia he would withdraw offer to France to continue to use strategic base at Bizerte and invite another Western country--i.e., US or Britain--to use it.

1. Bourguiba unlikely to retreat on evacuation issue-- this has been his consistent position since it first arose in July 1956. And there is substantial domestic objection to his being "too soft with France."

IV. Should Bourguiba carry through on threat it will create serious problems for US in its dealing with France and Tunisia.

A. French Ambassador in Tunis has already expressed concern over Bourguiba's confidence that he has US and British backing. 25X6



V. In Paris, where Bourguiba has for many months been highly unpopular, rightist opponents of Premier Gaillard's "conciliation" efforts toward North Africa are already exploiting situation.

A. They can be expected to tighten demand for further watering down of basic statute for Algeria, now before Council of the Republic (upper house).

NSC BRIEFING

15 January 1958

TUNISIAN-FRENCH NEGOTIATIONS *(short form)*

- I. Tunisian-French negotiations of common defense agreement were broken off by Paris 15 January on the grounds of alleged Tunisian aid to Algerian rebels.
    - A. French claim that on 11 January force of Algerian rebels retreated into Tunisia after clash with French, taking several French "prisoners."
    - B. French claim that quantity of "heavy weapons" are enroute from Syria to Algerians through Tunisia.
  - II. Situation further complicated by Bourguiba's recent refusal 8 January to agree to stationing of French air police at four Tunisian airfields. French forces totalling 18,000 now occupy these and other installations.
    - A. Bourguiba also threatened that if France did not evacuate all Tunisia he would offer Bizerte to US and UK.
      1. Bourguiba unlikely to retreat on evacuation issue.
  - III. Should Bourguiba carry through on threat it will create serious problems for US in its dealing with France and Tunisia. 25X6
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- IV. In Paris Rightist opponents of Gaillard's "conciliation" efforts toward North Africa are exploiting situation.

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